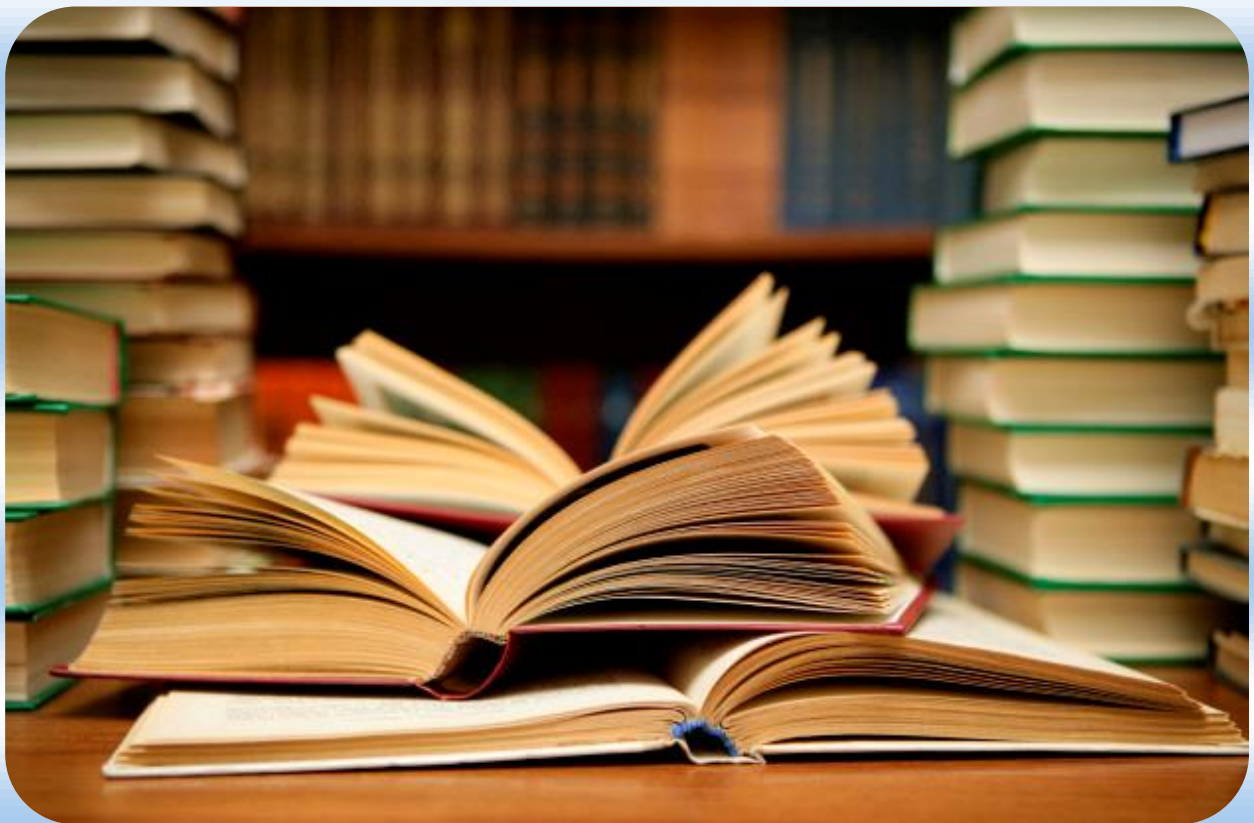


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APRIL-2018

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

West Bengal Launches Rupashree scheme for marriage of poor girls

After rolling out "Kanyashree" project for empowering adolescent girls, the West Bengal government on Wednesday introduced a new scheme "Rupashree" for marriage assistance to girls coming from economically weaker families with a budgetary allocation of Rs 1,500 crore. Presenting the state budget for 2018-19, Finance Minister Amit Mitra said: "I propose to extend a one-time assistance of Rs 25,000 to the family of the girl with an annual income upto Rs 1.5 lakh at the time of marriage after attaining the age of 18 years.

120 castes/communities notified in Central OBC list in last 3 years: Government

NEW DELHI: A total of 120 entries containing castes, their synonyms and sub-castes have been notified in the Central List of Other Backward Classes in the last three years. The Government of India notifies inclusion of castes/communities in the Central List of Other Backward Classes for different States/Union Territories on the basis of advice tendered by National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) under Section 9(1) of the NCBC Act, 1993. The NCBC determines inclusion or otherwise of castes/communities in the Central List of OBCs on the basis of norms established w.r.t. social, educational, economic, representation in Central Services and Miscellaneous parameters.

Government launches Digital Initiative for ease of exports

NEW DELHI: In line with the Digital India NSE 0.00 % initiative, the government has developed three online portals to make it easier to export farm products from India and reduce transaction costs. "Potential for agricultural and food export will get a great boost due to these digital initiatives," commerce and industry minister Suresh Prabhu said while launching the portals on Tuesday. The digital platforms, developed by the Export Inspection Council, have integrated the entire export food chain by linking primary production, chain catch, aquaculture pond, dairy farms and apiaries. The council is the official export certification body of the government.

NIRF Rankings 2018: IISc Overall Best, AIIMS Best Medical College

NEW DELHI: The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru was adjudged the overall best institution in the country by the Human Resource Development Ministry's national ranking framework (NIRF). Union HRD minister Prakash Javadekar, while announcing the rankings at an event in the Vigyan Bhavan, said the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) has been adjudged the best engineering college and the Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad (IIM-A)

India-Canada: Cabinet approves MoU in research and industry-academic collaboration

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was apprised of an agreement between India and Canada to promote collaboration in research and innovation through talent mobility. "The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aims at fostering cross-border partnerships focused on research excellence and industry-academic collaboration between India and Canada that brings robust innovation gains to both countries," said an official statement.

EXIM Bank extends \$4.5 billion loan to Bangladesh for social, infrastructure projects

The Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) will give loans worth about Rs 29,200 crore (USD 4.5 billion) to Bangladesh for financing of various social and infrastructure projects. The Exim Bank entered into an agreement with the Bangladesh government on October 4, 2017 to extend this line of credit facility on behalf of the Indian government, the RBI said in a notification. Bangladesh will also use this financing facility to import consultancy services from India.

TRAI proposes Wi-Fi grid to bring down cost of internet by 90%

NEW DELHI: Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Thursday submitted a proposal of open-architecture based Wi-Fi grid to bring down the cost of internet by 90 per cent, to telecom minister Manoj Sinha. TRAI chairman RS Sharma said the proposed open-architecture will bring down data prices to one-tenth of the current level. According to TRAI, the products available for consumption should begin from 'sachet sized' — at a price as low as `2.

Government constitutes committee to regulate news portals

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has instituted a committee to regulate online portals, including news websites, entertainment sites and media aggregators. The 10-member committee, formed on Wednesday, will include secretaries of the departments of Home, Legal Affairs, Electronics and Information and Technology, and Industrial Policy and Promotion. The CEO of MyGov and a representative each of the Press Council of India and National Broadcasters' Association will also be part of the committee.

Government to launch Gobardhan Yojana nationally from Haryana

'Gobar-dhan Yojana', the central scheme for managing and converting cattle dung into manure and biogas, will be launched at the national level from Karnal in Haryana on April 30, a state government spokesman said here on Friday. Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation Uma Bharti and Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar will launch the scheme, which is aimed at keeping villages clean while increasing the income of farmers and cattle owners.

President Ram Nath Kovind embarks on 3-nation Africa tour

President Ram Nath Kovind, accompanied by First Lady Savita Kovind, on Saturday embarked on a three-nation State visit to the African countries of Equatorial Guinea, Swaziland and Zambia from April 7 to 12. The President's visit to Equatorial Guinea and Swaziland will be the first-ever visit by any head of state of India. President Kovind's visit to Zambia is taking place after 29 years. The visit comes at the invitation of Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo.

India to build strategic railway link between Kathmandu and Raxaul in Bihar

India will build a strategic railway link between Raxaul in Bihar and Kathmandu in Nepal to facilitate people-to-people contact and bulk movement of goods. The announcement was made today after delegation-level talks between Indian and Nepalese officials chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart K P Sharma Oli, who is on a three-day visit. The two prime ministers agreed to construct the new electrified rail line, which will be financed by India, connecting the border city in India to Nepal.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana launched in New Delhi

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan launched Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) scheme in Delhi and distributed new LPG connections and cylinders to beneficiaries here. During the event, about 400 LPG connections were handed over to families belonging to below poverty line category. "Nearly, 5 lakh women die every year from domestic pollution. We have gathered here to provide clean fuel to Delhi," Pradhan said while addressing the gathering.

Health Ministry bans over-the-counter sale of 14 steroid creams

To prevent indiscriminate sale of topical preparations containing steroids and antibiotics without prescription, the Health Ministry has banned over-the-counter sale of around 14 such creams. In a March 23 notification, the Ministry has put 14 steroid-based creams and ointments under the Schedule H category by making amendments to certain Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945. The decision was taken following consultation with the Drugs Technical Advisory Board which had recommended a ban on the sale of such creams without prescription.

UIDAI launches digitally signed QR code with photo on e-Aadhaar

The UIDAI has brought in a digitally-signed QR Code on e-Aadhaar that will now contain photograph of the Aadhaar holder too, in addition to demographic details, to facilitate better offline verification of an individual. UIDAI CEO Ajay Bhushan Pandey said this would aid quick verification of the Aadhaar card. PTI

UIDAI launches Updated QR code for offline Aadhaar verification

To shield the crucial information and add an extra level of privacy to Aadhaar against any sort of tampering, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has introduced an updated digitally signed 'QR code' on e-Aadhaar that will now contain the photograph of the Aadhaar user with other non-sensitive details like name, address and birth date. The new 'QR code' can be used for offline user verification without disclosing the 12-digit identification number, according to a PTI report.

FSSAI launches Project Dhoop to address vitamin D deficiency amongst youngsters

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Monday launched 'Project Dhoop', an initiative aimed at shifting the school assembly time to noon to ensure maximum absorption of Vitamin D in students through natural sunlight. The project was launched at National Bal Bhavan here, and saw participation of around 600 students from NCERT, NDMC and North MCD Schools. FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal said the schools across the country have been sent two advisories asking them to hold daily assembly between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

India donates \$1 million for Swaziland's National Disaster Management Agency

India today donated USD 1 million to support Swaziland's national disaster management agency and expressed commitment to developmental partnership to create local capacities in the country and across Africa. The commitment came as President Ram Nath Kovind addressed Swaziland's parliament, becoming the first visiting Head of the State to do so. The president said India was committed "to developmental partnership and India's approach is to create local capacities in Swaziland and across Africa.

11th World Hindi Conference to be held in Mauritius

Mauritius Education Minister Leela Devi Dookhun Luchoomun and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Tuesday released the logo of 11th World Hindi Conference and launched its website as well. Speaking on the occasion, the Mauritius Education Minister appreciated the logo and said the image of a ship struggling to keep sailing in the water is similar to what the difficulties Hindi is facing today.

India's first high-speed electric locomotive of 12000HP capacity launched

As part of the Prime Minister's flagship Make in India project, Indian Railways is all set to induct the first high-speed electric locomotive to its list of transport vehicles. The 12,000 horsepower high-speed electric locomotive will be flagged off from Bihar's Madhepura loco factory by PM Narendra Modi on Tuesday. Here's all you need to know about the locomotive and its launch.

Government invites proposal for India's first offshore wind project

The government has invited expression of interest for the country's first offshore wind energy project, in line with its aim of having 5 GW such capacities by 2022. The National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE), an autonomous body under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), has called for Expression of Interest' (Eoi) for the first offshore wind energy project of India, an MNRE statement said.

AIB approves \$140 million loan to improve Rural Connectivity in Madhya Pradesh

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will extend a USD 140-million loan to improve rural connectivity in Madhya Pradesh. "Approximately 1.5 million rural residents in Madhya Pradesh stand to directly benefit from improved livelihoods, education and mobility with the USD 140-million loan approved by the Board of Directors of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank," said a statement issued by the AIIB.

CJI first among equals, power to allocate work: SC

Reiterating that the Chief Justice of India is "the first among equals" with the "exclusive prerogative" to allocate cases and constitute benches, a Supreme Court bench led by the CJI Wednesday said "there cannot be a presumption of mistrust" about the discharge of the CJI's Constitutional responsibilities. Dismissing a PIL that sought directions to regulate the CJI's power to form benches and allocate cases, the bench of CJI DipakMisra and Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud sought to dispel the senior-junior judges notion.

Government launches e-FRRO scheme to facilitate hassle-free travel for foreigners

To facilitate hassle-free travel to India for foreigners, the government today formally launched the e-FRRO scheme under which they can avail of various visa and immigration related services online. Launching the project, Home Minister Rajnath Singh said foreigners will be not be required to visit Foreigners Registration Office (FRO) or Foreigner Regional Registration Office (FRRO) offices anymore, unless specifically called upon.

US adds India to the currency practices and macroeconomic policies monitoring list

The United States has included India in "the monitoring list" of its "major trading partners that merit close attention to their currency practices and macroeconomic policies". The list is a part of the semi-annual report on "Macroeconomic and Foreign Exchange Policies of Major Trading Partners of the United States" prepared by the US Department of Treasury for the US Congress. The report, which was submitted to the US Congress on April 13, included the list which comprised of China, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Switzerland, and India.

Intra-state e-way bill rolled out in 5 states

The e-way Bill system for intra-state movement of goods will be implemented from April 15 in five states. According to the GST Council, the five states are Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh. With the roll-out of e-way Bill system in these states, it is expected that trade and industry will be further facilitated insofar as the transport of goods is concerned, an official release said.

Government launches Gram SwarajAbhiyan

MANDLA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday launched a scheme that seeks to strengthen the country's panchayati raj system and address critical gaps that hinder its success. He launched the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan at Ramnagar in this tribal-dominated district of Madhya Pradesh on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day. The Central government scheme aims at making rural local bodies self-sustainable, financially stable and more efficient.

Ayushman Bharat Scheme: First health & wellness centre inaugurated in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the first health centre under Ayushman Bharat Scheme here today. He also inaugurated the first phase of the Bastar Internet scheme under which a 40,000-km-long network of fibre optics cable would be spread across the seven districts of the tribal region. Modi is the first prime minister to visit tribal district Bijapur, one of the most backward regions of the country but has started doing well on various development parameters.

TRAI launches beta portal for comparing telcos' tariffs

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Monday unveiled the beta version of a portal that aims to bring on one platform, the tariffs offered by telecom operators in different service areas. The move is expected to provide more transparency and information on multiple tariff offerings by telcos, helping consumers at large. "To enable consumers see tariffs of different TSPs (telecom service providers) and different Licensed Service Areas (LSAs) .

Government launches first tranche of Sovereign gold bonds for FY19

The government said on Friday it will launch the first tranche of sovereign gold bonds for the current fiscal on April 16, offering a 2.5% annual interest to investors. The latest issuance of bonds is part of the government's efforts to garner as much as Rs 5,000 crore from all the three gold schemes this fiscal — the same as 2017-18 (revised estimate). Applications for the bond will be accepted from April 16 to April 20, the finance ministry said in a statement.

Government launches DARPAN-PLI App

The DARPAN-PLI App will help in collection of premium for postal life insurance and rural postal life insurance policies at branch post offices anywhere in India, with online updation of the policies. Speaking on the occasion, Sinha said, these initiative will help Department of Posts in providing better after-sales service to customers, particularly those living in rural areas of the country.

Law Commission of India favours simultaneous elections

A draft white paper released by the Law Commission of India on Tuesday recommends holding of simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies, possibly in 2019. It suggests amending the Constitution to realise this objective. In a public notice annexed to the draft, the commission, which is the government's highest law advisory body, said the white paper would be circulated to "constitutional experts, academia, political parties, bureaucrats, students, etc." The commission, headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice B.S. Chauhan.

Government launches Study in India programme to attract foreign students

The Union Government, on Wednesday, launched a programme to draw more foreign students to India by projecting 160 premier universities and institutes, including IITs and IIMs, as the ideal destination for higher education. The 'Study in India' programme — similar to the initiative launched by Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and Canada — aims at boosting the country's share of international students and, subsequently, improve the global reputation and rankings of Indian educational institutions.

GoM recommends uniform road tax structure for vehicles across country

Transferring vehicles from one state to another could become hassle free soon, if a recommendation by a group of state transport ministers is accepted by the government. The group of ministers (GoM) constituted by the Union road transport and highways ministry, which met on Friday in Guwahati, has recommended a uniform structure of road tax for vehicles across states, a senior government official said. The GoM is headed by Rajasthan transport minister Yoonus Khan.

Rashtriya Gram SwarajAbhiyan: CCEA approves restructured Centrally Sponsored Scheme

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Saturday approved a restructured Rashtriya Gram SwarajAbhiyan (RGSA) aimed at building infrastructure and stepping up initiatives for e-governance. Prime Minister NarendraModi will launch the scheme on National Panchayati Raj Day on April 24. The scheme will focus on training, building infrastructure, stepping up initiatives for e-governance under the e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP).

CCEA approves restructured National Bamboo Mission

New Delhi, Apr 25 () The government today approved a restructured National Bamboo Mission (NBM) with an outlay of Rs 1,290 crore for two years, a move aimed at benefiting one lakh farmers, said an official release. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved Centrally Sponsored Scheme of NBM under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) during remaining period of 14th Finance Commission (2018-19 and 2019-20), it said.

Government launches Seed import-export portal

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh today launched a portal to facilitate export-import of seeds and planting material. A seed import-export portal has been developed for making the trade process easy, an official statement said. Singh said all prohibitions imposed on the export of seeds of different varieties have been removed so as to encourage export of seeds. With the launch of this portal, he said all organisations importing-exporting seeds will not be required to submit their applications in 20 copies.

India ranks 138th in World Press Freedom Index 2018

India's ranking in the Press Freedom Index has fallen two places to 138, a watchdog said on Wednesday in an annual report, blaming "physical violence" against journalists like GauriLankesh as the key reason behind the country's low ranking. Norway topped the list of having the world's freest press for the second year in a row, the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said while North Korea remained the most repressive country followed by Eritrea, Turkmenistan, Syria and then China.

ITC ties up with NITI Aayog to train 2 lakh farmers to increase their income

Guwahati, Apr 26 () FMCG major ITC today said it has joined hands with NITI Aayog to train 2 lakh farmers to increase their income and raise productivity of major crops in 25 "aspirational districts" across seven states in the country by 2022. These 25 aspirational districts are in Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and partnership is for a period of four years, i.e. up to April 2022, ITC said in a statement.

NITI Aayog launches Atal New India Challenge under Atal Innovation Mission

The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under the NITI Aayog shall be launching the Atal New India Challenge on April 26. Under the Atal New India Challenge, which shall be run in collaboration with five ministries, AIM will invite prospective innovators/MSMEs/start-ups to design market-ready products, using cutting edge technologies or prototypes across 17 identified focus areas such as Climate Smart Agriculture, Smart Mobility, Predictive Maintenance of Rolling Stock, Waste Management etc. Applicants showing capability.

India becomes World's second largest mobile phone producer

India is now the second largest mobile phone producer in the world after China, as per information shared by Indian Cellular Association with Telecom Minister Manoj Sinha and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. "We are happy to inform you that with the strenuous and calibrated efforts of government of India, ICA and FTTF, India has now emerged as the second largest producer of mobile handset by volume," ICA National President Pankaj Mohindroo said in a letter to both the union ministers on March 28.

Atal Pension Yojana subscriber base touches over 97 lakh: PFRDA

New Delhi, Apr 2 () The subscriber base of Atal Pension Yojana (APY) stood at 97.05 lakh at the end of the 2017-18 fiscal, a tad lower than the target of 1 crore set by the pension regulator PFRDA. APY, which mainly caters to the unorganised sector employees, saw an addition of over 48.21 lakh subscribers in 2017-18, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) said in a release today. "At the end of financial year 2017-18, 97.05 lakh subscribers have enrolled under the Atal Pension Yojana," it said.

Government inks 16 APAs in March 2018

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on Tuesday said that it has entered into 14 Unilateral Advance Pricing Agreements (UAPA) and two Bilateral Advance Pricing Agreements (BAPA) during the month of March, 2018. The 16 Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs) entered into during March, 2018 pertain to various sectors of the economy like telecommunication, Information Technology (IT), automobile, pharmaceutical, beverage, trading

India becomes second largest manufacturer of crude steel

In a major achievement, India has overtaken Japan to become the world's second largest producer of crude steel in February, according to the Steel Users Federation of India (SUFIL). At present, China is the largest producer of crude steel in the world, accounting for more than 50% of the production. India's crude steel production was up 4.4% and stood at 93.11 million tonnes (MT) for the period April 2017 to February 2018, compared with April 2016 to February 2017.

RBI constitutes inter-departmental group to study launching of fiat digital currency

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has clamped down on virtual currencies, including Bitcoin, directing all entities regulated by the central bank — mainly banks, finance companies and wallets — not to deal with or provide services to any individual or business entities dealing with or settling virtual currencies, joining the global crackdown on trading of virtual coins. The RBI crackdown came a day after Amit Bhardwaj.

ICICI Bank becomes first Indian bank to go live on SWIFT's GPI service

Global financial messaging cooperative Swift on Friday said ICICI Bank has become its first Indian client to go live with an improved cross-border payments service. The announcement of the service, which Swift claimed as being more transparent, comes weeks after the discovery of one of the largest banking frauds to be detected in Indian history, the Rs 130 billion NiravModi scam at the Punjab National Bank (PNB).

RBI switches back to GDP model from GVA model to measure economy

The Reserve Bank on Thursday switched back to the gross domestic product (GDP)-based measure to offer its growth estimates from the gross value added (GVA) methodology, citing global best practices. The government had started analysing growth estimates using GVA methodology from January 2015 and had also changed the base year to 2018 from January. While GVA gives a picture of the state of economic activity from the producers' side or supply side, the GDP model gives the picture from the consumers' side or demand perspective.

BhanuPratap Sharma replaces Vinod Rai as chairman of Banks Board Bureau

The Union Finance Ministry has reconstituted the Banks Board Bureau (BBB) and appointed BhanuPratap Sharma as its chairman, replacing former Comptroller and Auditor General Vinod Rai. Mr. Sharma was former the chairman of recruitment and assessment centre of DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) and former Principal Secretary (Finance) in the Bihar government. Some of the other new members are: VedikaBhandarkar, former vice-chairman and managing director (investment banking and global markets) of Credit Suisse.

India expected to grow at 7.4% in 2018: IMF

India is expected to grow at 7.4% in 2018 and 7.8% in 2019, leaving its nearest rival China behind respectively at 6.6% and 6.4% in the two years, the IMF said on Tuesday. With growth picking up after falling sharply in the second quarter of 2017 due to "one-off factors", India, in 2018 and 2019, would re-emerge as one of the fastest growing major economies, it said. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in the latest World Economic Outlook (WEO).

India is now world's sixth largest economy: IMF

India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the worth of the economy, clocked in at \$2.6 trillion for 2017, according to the database of the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook (WEO) for April 2018. That is well over the \$2.5 trillion milestone that supposedly separates big economies from pretenders. India is now the world's sixth largest economy, displacing France. The five economies ahead are the United States, China, Japan, Germany and United Kingdom. "This is a landmark development for India,".

India pitches for independent BRICS credit rating agency

WASHINGTON/NEW DELHI: India has pressed the BRICS nations to set up an independent rating agency of the five-member group. The first meeting of the BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors was held on the sidelines of the IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings yesterday. Representing India in the meeting of the 5 nation bloc, Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg sought the support of the Presidency.

TCS becomes India's first \$100 billion IT company

NEW DELHI: Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), the country's largest IT outsourcing company created history on Monday by becoming the first Indian company to reach the \$100 billion market capitalisation (m-cap) mark. The shares of the IT behemoth were trading 4 per cent above previous closing mark at Rs 3,545 on the BSE at 10.30 am, thus hitting an all-time high. By definition, market capitalisation is the value of a company that is traded on the stock market, calculated by multiplying the total number of shares by the present share price.

India highest recipient of Remittances in 2017: World Bank

India topped as the highest recipient of remittances globally in 2017, with its diaspora sending back \$69 billion, a World Bank statement said here on Monday. "Remittance inflows improved in all regions and the top remittance recipients were India with \$69 billion, followed by China (\$64 billion), the Philippines (\$33 billion), Mexico (\$31 billion), Nigeria (\$22 billion), and Egypt (\$20 billion)," the statement said. Remittances to India rose sharply by 9.9 percent in 2017, reversing the previous year's sharp decline, the report added.

Fitch retains India's sovereign rating at 'BBB-' with 'stable' outlook

Global credit rating agency Fitch today affirmed India's sovereign rating at 'BBB-' with 'stable' outlook, saying that the country's medium-term growth potential is strong. 'BBB-' rating indicates lowest investment grade. "India's rating balances a strong medium-term growth outlook and favourable external balances with weak fiscal finances and some lagging structural factors, including governance standards and a still-difficult, but improving, business environment," Fitch said.

NSE's India Index Services & Products Ltd launches Nifty equity savings index

NSE's index services subsidiary, India Index Services & Products Limited, has introduced Nifty Equity Savings Index, which can serve as a benchmark for equity savings funds offered by various mutual fund houses. The index captures the performance of a portfolio having exposure to equity, equity arbitrage and debt instruments and is similar to the investment philosophy of equity savings funds, NSE said in a statement.

Uttarakhand's second Mega Food Park inaugurated at Udham Singh Nagar

New Delhi, Apr 8 () Union Minister for Food Processing Industries Harsimrat Kaur Badal today inaugurated the second mega food park in Uttarakhand, an official statement said. The over 50-acre Himalayan Mega Food Park Private Ltd has been set up at a cost of Rs 99.96 crore and will benefit around 25,000 farmers in this and neighbouring districts, Ministry of Food Processing Industries said in a statement.

Tamil Nadu Government launches Uzhavan app for farmers

In a bid to use technology for farmers' benefit, the Tamil Nadu Government has come out with a mobile application that will allow ryots to have access to nine types of services, including details about their crop insurance. Chief Minister K Palaniswami has launched the bi-lingual 'Uzhavan' (farmer) app here recently, an official release said today. The app, which can be downloaded from Google Playstore, can be used by farmers to get information on farm subsidies, book farm equipment and related infrastructure.

Madras HC becomes first st court in south India to introduce e-court fee payment facility

The Madras High Court on Friday became the first court in south India and eighth in the country to introduce e-court fee payment facility. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Chief Justice Indira Banerjee jointly launched the facility at the principal seat of the High Court here as well as its Madurai Bench. In his address, the Chief Minister said: "On this happy occasion, I inform that this government stands in support of judiciary.

Diu Smart City: First to run on 100% Renewable Energy during daytime

The Diu Smart City has become the first city in India that runs on 100 per cent renewable energy during the daytime, setting a bench-mark for other cities to follow, an official release said today. Diu had been importing 73 per cent of its power from Gujarat till last year, it added. The city has developed a 9-MW solar park spread over 50 hectares rocky barren land, besides installing solar panels on the rooftops on 79 government buildings, generating 1.3 MW annually, the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry's release said.

Chandrayaan-2 launch postponed to October-November 2018

India's second moon mission 'Chandrayaan-2' which is expected to be launched around October-November this year, is likely to cost Rs 8 billion, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K. Sivan said on Wednesday. It includes Rs 2 billion for launching and Rs 6 billion for the satellite, Sivan told Union Minister of State for Atomic Energy and Space Jitendra Singh, during a meeting here. Chandrayaan-2 will be equipped with a lander and rover probe which will descend on the surface of the moon from where it will observe.

IIT-Delhi installs India's first 5G lab

IIT-Delhi (IIT-D) has set up a radio lab with an array of antennas for “standardisation, research and manufacturing” of 5G equipment, the institute said on Tuesday. “In an effort to establish India as a key global player in the standardisation, research and development and manufacturing of 5G equipment, a Massive MIMO radio laboratory has been set up at IIT Delhi and will be inaugurated on April 13. This will be the first such lab in India,” an IIT-Delhi statement said. Saif Khan Mohammed.

Indian origin scientist develops world's first microfactory for e-waste

An Indian-origin scientist in Australia has launched the world's first microfactory that can transform the components from electronic waste items such as smartphones and laptops into valuable materials for re-use. According to VeenaSahajwalla, a professor at the University of New South Wales, the e-waste microfactory has the potential to reduce the rapidly growing problem of vast amounts of electronic waste causing environmental harm and going into landfill.

Indu Malhotra: First woman lawyer to sworn in as Supreme Court judge

NEW DELHI: Senior advocate Indu Malhotra would be administered oath of office by Chief Justice DipakMisra tomorrow morning at the Supreme Court, making her the first woman lawyer to enter the top judiciary directly. 61-year old Malhotra's name, cleared by the government, was one of the two recommended by the collegium to be elevated to the apex court bench. The list of the business of the apex court mentions that Malhotra will be sworn in tomorrow. Earlier in the day, a Law Ministry communique said.

Madhubani railway station in Bihar gets makeover with Mithila paintings

Once looked upon as a dirty railway station, Madhubani station in Bihar now sports a completely different look. The rich culture of the region -- Mithila paintings -- now adorn the walls of the railway station. Not just that, it has also now transformed as one of the cleanest stations. Divisional Railway Manager Samastipur R.K. Jain said that it is a unique initiative of the Indian Railways to experiment with local artists voluntarily painting.

Walmiki and Malhar: 2 unknown languages discovered

The University of Hyderabad on Friday said two languages “which were lying hidden from linguists” have been discovered by a professor of linguistics in the institution. As a part of the activity of the Centre for Endangered Languages and Mother Tongue Studies, Prof Panchanan Mohanty discovered two languages recently, which were “lying hidden from linguists”, a university release said. One of them is calledWalmiki and is spoken in the district of Koraput.

Make BCCI public body and bring under RTI: Law Commission

The Law Commission has suggested to the government that it turn the Board of Control of Cricket in India into a government-controlled body. The Commission has asked the government to classify BCCI as a national sports federation and bring it under the ambit of the Right to Information Act (RTI). Headed by Justice BS Chauhan, the Commission has recommended that BCCI should be classified as "state" under Article 12 of the Constitution so that it is answerable to authorities like the Supreme Court.

65th National Film Awards

Late actor Sridevi was honoured with the Best Actress award at the 65th National Film Awards while Vinod Khanna was given the Dadasaheb Phalke award posthumously. The awards were announced Friday afternoon by the jury headed by renowned filmmaker Shekhar Kapur. The 10-member-panel comprises screenwriter Imtiaz Hussain, lyricist Mehboob, actress Gautami Tadimalla, Kannada director P Sheshadri, Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury, Ranjit Das, Rajesh Mapuskar, Tripurari Sharma and Rumi Jaffrey.

Gujarati poet Sitanshu Yashaschandra chosen for 2017 Saraswati Samman

Eminent Gujarati poet Sitanshu Yashaschandra's poetry collection "Vakhar" has been chosen for the Saraswati Samman for 2017, the K K Birla Foundation has announced. The selection for the award is made by a high level 'Chayan Parishad' (selection committee), presided over by former secretary general of Lok Sabha, Subhash C Kashyap. "In the 'chayan parishad' meeting, books were discussed thoroughly and 'Vakhar' (poetry) by Shri Sitanshu Yashaschandra has been selected for Saraswati Samman, 2017.

CSIR wins National Intellectual Property (IP) Award 2018

NEW DELHI: The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has been awarded the National Intellectual Property Award, 2018 for being the top research and development organisation for patents and commercialisation. The award was handed over by Union Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu to mark the World Intellectual Property Day, an official statement said today. The CSIR has been ranked ninth amongst 1,207 government institutions.

M Sathiyavathy appointed as member of UPSC

Labour Secretary M Sathiyavathy today took over as a member of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). Senior IAS officer U P Singh, who is at present secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, has been given additional charge of the post of secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment. Sathiyavathy is an IAS officer of the 1982 batch of Union Territories cadre. She comes to the UPSC with a rich experience.

Rajesh Ranjan appointed as DG of CISF

NEW DELHI: Senior IPS officer Rajesh Ranjan was on Tuesday appointed as Director General of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). Ranjan, a 1984 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Bihar cadre, is at present Special Director General, Border Security Force (BSF). He has been appointed as the chief of the CISF till November 30, 2020, i.e. the date of his superannuation, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said. The post was lying vacant after incumbent OP Singh took over as Director General of the Uttar Pradesh Police in January this year.

Balram Bhargava appointed DG of ICMR

AIIMS professor Balram Bhargava was today appointed the Director General of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Secretary of the Department of Health Research. Bhargava, at present Professor/Senior Consultant Cardiologist at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here, has been appointed to the post for a period of three years or until attainment of age of 60 years, according to an order issued by the Personnel Ministry.

Boeing, HAL, Mahindra tie up to build F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jet in India

Adding a new dimension to the heated global contest to manufacture fighter aircraft in India, The Boeing Company on Thursday announced a partnership with public sector Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) and private sector Mahindra Defence Systems (MDS) to make the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet in India. The partnership would come into effect if India were to select the Super Hornet in any one of two ongoing fighter procurements: An inquiry for 57 “multi-role carrier borne fighters” (MRCBF) for the navy.

Bhabha Kavach: BARC develops cheaper, lightweight bulletproof jackets

The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has developed a next-generation bulletproof jacket for the Indian armed forces, which is not only cheaper but also much lighter. Bhabha Kavach, named after nuclear physicist Dr. Homi J. Bhabha, the jacket was developed at BARC's Trombay centre in response to a request from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Ministry of Home Affairs. Dr. Kinshuk Dasgupta, scientific officer at BARC's materials group, told The Hindu that the jacket weighs just 6.6 kg in comparison to the 17-kg jackets in use.

Commonwealth Games 2018: India's medals tally

The list of India's medal winners at the Gold Coast games : Gold (26), Saina Nehwal clinched women's singles gold in badminton. Boxer Vikas Krishan wins gold in 75kg category at Commonwealth Games. Manika Batra wins gold in table tennis women's singles, becoming the first Indian woman to do so. Vinesh Phogat wins gold in women's wrestling freestyle 50 kg Nordic event. Neeraj Chopra became the first Indian javelin thrower to claim a gold medal.

Cabinet approves ordinance for death penalty for child rapists

Seeing the rage over rapes of children in the country, the Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday approved the promulgation of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 for Death to child rapists. Government said it has taken serious note of incidents of rape in various parts of the country. While expressing deep anguish over such incidents, it has been decided to devise a comprehensive response to deal with the situation.

Hindon Elevated Road: India's longest elevated road inaugurated in Uttar Pradesh

The much awaited India's longest elevated road was finally inaugurated by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath today. The 10.3 km long Hindon Elevated Road's primary objectivity was to ease traffic movement from Ghaziabad to New Delhi and vice versa. The Hindon Elevated Road Project will not just boast of being India's longest elevated road, it will also, in reality, reduce an hour-long journey to just 18 minutes. The flyover will be open to commuters from today.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Pakistan successfully test fires enhanced version of Babur cruise missile

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Saturday successfully test fired an enhanced version of indigenously-built Babur cruise missile that can deliver conventional and non-conventional weapons with a range of 700 kilometres. 'Babur Weapon System-1 (B)' incorporates advanced aerodynamics and avionics that can strike targets both at land and sea with high accuracy, the army said in a statement.

Ban Ki-moon elected as Chairman of Boao Forum

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was today elected as the new chairman of the Boao Forum for Asia, in a diplomatic boost to the think-tank modelled after the World Economic Forum which is held annually in Davos. Ban replaces former Japanese prime minister Yasuo Fukuda, state-run Xinhua news agency said. His appointment took place during the four-day annual session of Forum which started yesterday. Over 2,000 officials and business leaders from Asia and around the world are taking part in the meeting.

Abu Zeid: Jailed Egyptian Photographer wins 2018 UNESCO Press Freedom Prize

PARIS — The United Nations' cultural agency ignored warnings from Egypt and awarded the World Press Freedom Prize Monday to an imprisoned Egyptian photographer. An independent jury panel for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization gave the honor to Mahmoud Abu Zeid, a photojournalist known as Shawkan. He has been jailed since August 2013, when he was arrested in Cairo in while covering a demonstration at Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square.

2018 Pulitzer Prizes winners

The complete list of 2018 Pulitzer Prize winners. JOURNALISM Public service The New York Times and the New Yorker Breaking news reporting Staff of the Santa Rosa (Calif.) Press-Democrat Investigative reporting Staff of The Washington Post Explanatory reporting Staffs of the Arizona Republic and USA Today Network Local reporting Staff of the Cincinnati Enquirer National reporting Staffs of the New York Times and The Washington Post.

Index of Economic Freedom 2018: India ranks 130th

Washington, Apr 11 (PTI) India has jumped 13 places in the last one year to be earn 130th spot in the latest annual Index of Economic Freedom released by a top American think-tank. In 2017, India with a score of 52.6 points was ranked at 143 among 180 countries, two spots below neighbour Pakistan, according to the Index of Economic Freedom. China with 57.4 points was ranked 111 in the 2017 index of The Heritage Foundation.

India hosts 16th International Energy Forum (IEF) Ministerial Meeting

New Delhi: India, the world's third-largest energy consumer after the US and China, will host the 16th International Energy Forum Ministerial (IEF—16), that will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday. The ministerial comes in the backdrop of a supply cut by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and Russia that has led to a rally in global oil price. This has resulted in the cost of Indian basket of crude, which averaged \$47.56 a barrel in 2016-2017, touching \$63.80 (average price) in March 2018.

US adds India to the currency practices and macroeconomic policies monitoring list

The United States has included India in "the monitoring list" of its "major trading partners that merit close attention to their currency practices and macroeconomic policies". The list is a part of the semi-annual report on "Macroeconomic and Foreign Exchange Policies of Major Trading Partners of the United States" prepared by the US Department of Treasury for the US Congress. The report, which was submitted to the US Congress on April 13, included the list which comprised of China, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Switzerland, and India.

India to work with China on OPEC's Asian Premium issue

HYDERABAD: Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has said India will coordinate with China and other Asian countries to voice against the "Asian Premium" being charged by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Taking the initiative forward, the minister said, Indian Oil Corporation chairman Sanjiv Singh will coordinate with the head of China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) to chalk out the strategy that would result in getting better price from OPEC countries.

India wins six elections in UNECOSOC bodies

UNITED NATIONS: India has won six elections to UN Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc) bodies, five of them unanimously. In the polls held on Monday, India won places on the executive boards of four UN bodies, three commissions and a committee. India faced an election within the the Asia-Pacific group only for the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) Committee and it polled the highest number of votes, receiving 46 votes.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in London

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in London came with hopes of a "re-energised Commonwealth". To begin with, the summit was being held in the U.K., the founder of the grouping of mostly former British colonies, after 32 years. Besides, Queen Elizabeth II, the head of CHOGM, attended the summit, which she has done infrequently in the last few years owing to her health. She opened her homes in Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle for the event, in what was called a "charm offensive".

Commonwealth Cyber Declaration adopted by Commonwealth countries

The Commonwealth countries have unanimously agreed to take action on cybersecurity by 2020. In a landmark declaration at the end of Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (CHOGM) in London, the leaders of 53 countries agreed to work closely to evaluate and strengthen their cybersecurity frameworks and response mechanisms. A release issued, termed the declaration as the world's largest.

Commonwealth games 2018 medal standings

| Rank | Nation | Gold Medal | Silver Medal | Bronze Medal | Total |
|------|-----------------|------------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| 1 | AUS Australia | 80 | 59 | 59 | 198 |
| 2 | ENG England | 45 | 45 | 46 | 136 |
| 3 | IND India | 26 | 20 | 20 | 66 |
| 4 | CAN Canada | 15 | 40 | 27 | 82 |
| 5 | NZL New Zealand | 15 | 16 | 15 | 46 |

India-china informal summit held in wuhan

Wuhan: In a move that could upset Pakistan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping have agreed to undertake a joint India-China economic project in war-torn Afghanistan at their first informal summit in Wuhan, official sources said on Saturday. The understanding was reached between the two leaders during the two-day informal summit which concluded today, they said. As per the understanding, officials of both sides will identify.

Accessible Tourism: Nepal launches its first accessible trekking trail

Nepal has launched its first "accessible" trekking trail in Pokhara city for the differently-abled and the elderly. The trail was inaugurated as a part of three-day international conference on Accessible Tourism' held for the first time in the Himalayan nation from March 29 to March 31 in Pokhara, reports Xinhua news agency. Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Rabindra Adhikari inaugurated the 1.3-km section of the 14-km long hiking.

7 April: World Health Day

7 April 2018 : The World Health Day is a global health awareness day celebrated every year on 7 April, under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization, as well as other related organisations. In 1948, the WHO held the First World Health Assembly. This year is WHO's 70th anniversary. Every year, World Health Day is celebrated on 7 April to mark the anniversary of the founding of WHO in 1948.

United Nations launches UN Road Safety Trust Fund

Citing tragic road accidents in India and Canada, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed termed traffic deaths an urgent global concern as the world body launched a trust fund aimed at spurring action to help save lives in road accidents. During the General Assembly debate on road safety here yesterday, Mohammed said traffic accidents are the number one cause of death of young people and are responsible for keeping millions of people in poverty each year.

Soft Drinks Sugar tax in UK to combat obesity and sugar related diseases

Britons may have to shell out more for their soft drinks, as a so-called "sin tax" or "sugar tax" came into force in the UK today as part of the government's plan to combat obesity and sugar related disease. The Soft Drinks Industry Levy was announced by former UK Chancellor George Osborne in 2016 and is based on the levels of sugar in the drinks, with the most sugary drinks paying the highest tax.

